

Activities for kids, parents at festival

Pickin' on the Plains is more than just "sitting and listening."

Judy Kleinsorge, director of children's programs at Pioneer Memorial Library and Pat Wolf will be there to help children with a "Make and Take" crafts project from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 17.

The Colby Community College Art Department will be doing face painting from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday under the tree near the grandstand.

The Colby Rotary Club will sponsor a Kid-die Train that will follow the same route previously taken by Lon Sowers and Wilbur Henry with their horse and wagon rides. Boarding will also take place near the grandstand.

Chess and board games will be available for those who like to think while they listen to the bands, and will be at the picnic tables near the grandstand under the big tree.

Donations of non-perishable food items will be accepted at the ticket booth to benefit Genesis, the county food pantry. Supporters can drop off donations there even if they don't have time to stay for the festival.

There is a memorial photo display at the information booth near the CD table, honoring loyal supporters of the annual bluegrass

festival who died this past year – Lon Sowers and Wilbur Henry for their oxen- and pony-drawn cart rides; Gene Criss, accountant who shared his expertise with management of finances; Sam Wolf who worked hard in promotion, putting up yard signs and posters; and Merry Lee Lewis who served as a helper in many places since Pickin' on the Plains began 25 years ago. She and her husband John were among the original creators of the Colby festival.

An Open Stage from 9:30 to 11:40 a.m. on Saturday morning will give all those who are not actually billed as "performers" at this year's show a chance to play or sing in front of a live audience. A signup sheet will be available at the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau information booth. It will also be available on Friday evening before any billed performers take the stage.

"Anyone who would like to perform is highly encouraged to sign up ahead of time," said Lelani Thomas, director of the bureau.

Camping is available on the grounds by calling (800) 611-8835 or (785) 460-7643. For information, visit the website at www.colbybluegrass.org.

El Dorado performer to give music workshops

Gate prices include admission to music workshops on Saturday morning.

From 10 to 10:55 a.m. Saturday, Mark Johnson of El Dorado will give a workshop on band performance and stage presence. From noon to 12:55 p.m. he will conduct a workshop for beginning and intermediate banjo pickers.

"I began playing banjo in 1974 and have been on stage a few hundred times since then," Johnson said, "and there are so many bands out there who could be so much better if they were more aware of stage presence, and how to perform to their audience.

"Performers need to know how to respond to their audience by letting them know they appreciate them."

He noted that when the performer talks to his audience with his music, body language, a smile, and even a few jokes sometimes, the audience talks back with applause, and that's when the performer needs to let the audience know he appreciates their response. It all boils down to communication, Johnson said.

Johnson said he met Susan McLemore several years ago at the Winfield Bluegrass Festival. He said McLemore came to him,

because she said she needed to know more about the banjo. He said he's had 40 to 50 students over the years, and some have gone on to be pretty good pickers, but that Susan has learned well and is great on the banjo.

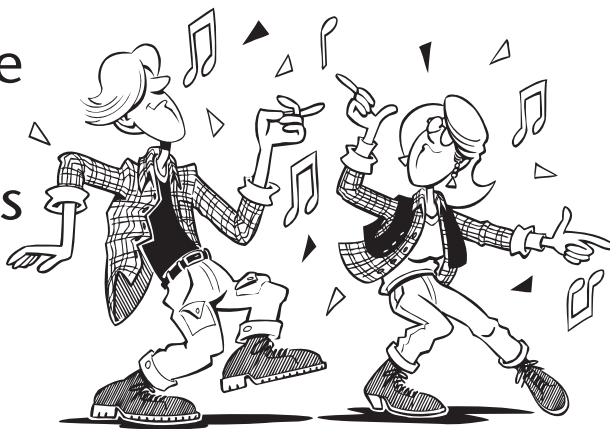
He said the best thing about bluegrass music is that it's always family oriented. He reminisced that when the first met the McLemores, they all began pickin' together, and having fun, and it grew into a great friendship. Nearly all his friends are ones he has met through festivals like the one in Colby, he added.

Johnson commented that he gave the McLemore twins some tips on stage presence and entertainment, and they put it to good use.

"With their talent and presence, they have a fantastic future in their group, 'Driven,'" he said. "They can go far because they are such good musicians and can hold an audience so well."

Besides being a musician, Johnson is marketing director for Prairie Rose Chuck Wagon in El Dorado. Chuck Wagon is a food and entertainment business in several states.

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the Bluegrass
Festival!



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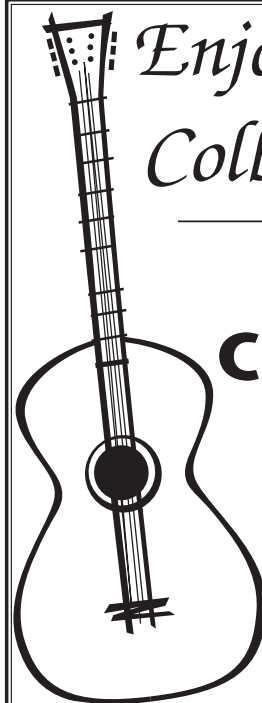
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